



## COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

**For Immediate Release**

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### **Virginia Department of Social Services Unveils New Debit Card System for Child Support Payments**

**Richmond** – Virginia Department of Social Services (VDSS) Commissioner Anthony Conyers, Jr., announced today that parents who receive child support payments processed by the Commonwealth's Division of Child Support Enforcement (DCSE) are now able to receive their support payments electronically by using a new debit card system.

As with direct deposit, debit cards eliminate the use of traditional paper checks. With either electronic method, customers can access the funds in their accounts more readily and can take advantage of the increased level of security they provide. Debit cards and direct deposit eliminate the risk of paper checks being lost or stolen. Customers who use debit cards also can avoid check cashing fees and delays caused by holidays and office closings. Virginia has made direct deposit available for child support payments since 1997, and more than 75,000 customers currently receive their payments through direct deposit.

"Our goal is to consistently leverage technology to improve our service delivery methods," said Virginia Department of Social Services Commissioner, Anthony Conyers Jr. "The debit card program will not only improve our efficiency, it will eliminate postal delays or checks getting lost in the mail."

The first phase of the statewide implementation of debit cards began in mid-January in Danville, Abingdon and Verona and the remainder of the State will be phased in by spring 2007. The debit card system was successfully tested in 2006 with child support customers in Charlottesville and Suffolk. "We are always trying to find new ways to improve customer services and reduce operating costs. This new system is one more feature we can provide our customers that will make payments more convenient and secure; and, in most cases, faster," said DCSE Director Nick Young.

Since mid-January when the program was initiated, over 13,000 customers have received debit cards and are receiving their child support more quickly. Customers are given the option of using the new debit card or signing up for direct deposit. Customers who choose not to sign up for direct deposit will automatically be issued a Mastercard-brand debit card. Customers will be able to retrieve their money through a Wachovia automated teller machine (ATM) or any bank displaying the MASTERCARD or CIRRUS brand marks. Customer accounts will be protected by a personal identification number (PIN). Balances and transaction histories will be provided without charge. In addition, the card can be used at participating retailers anywhere MASTERCARD or Maestro debit cards are accepted.

For more information about the new debit card system or direct deposit, call toll-free: 1-800-468-8894. Customers can also find out specific information about their child support case by logging on to the VDSS Web site at <http://www.dss.virginia.gov/family/dcse.html>

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